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OREGON GOVERNOR SUPPORTS EFFORTS TO PRODUCE 'SALMON-FRIENDLY' POWER

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Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber and the Portland City Council have urged Oregon utilities to offer ``salmon-friendly power'' from renewable energy sources, low-impact hydroelectric dams and high-efficiency natural gas turbines.

The power is marketed by For The Sake of The Salmon, a coalition of tribal, federal, state and local governments, the fishing and timber industries, utilities, environmental groups and agricultural producers, according to Bill Bradbury, executive director of the Coalition. The power will be cleaner and less expensive than other forms of green power, he said.

Under the program, energy providers and utilities offer the clean energy and the coalition ``certifies'' the product will not harm salmon. The coalition then links the energy providers or utilities with retail merchandisers willing to offer discount coupons to people who purchase the power. The retailers' discounts--off products in their stores--will help offset the additional cost of the power.

The salmon-friendly electricity will be about 5% above market costs, Bradbury said. A portion of the cost--0.5 cents/kWh--will go to the Pacific Salmon Watershed Fund, a fund established by For The Sake of The Salmon, and will be spent on salmon habitat projects. The coalition plans to work with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to identify projects, Bradbury said.

While For The Sake of The Salmon has yet to offer its first package, Fred Meyer, a major Northwest grocery chain, has agreed to offer the coupons, Bradbury said. Fred Meyer was originally going to work with Electric Lite, which had proposed offering salmon-friendly power during a pilot open-access program in Puget Sound Energy territory. But Electric Lite closed its local offices and the project never got off the ground, Bradbury said.

PacifiCorp is working on the details of a salmon-friendly plan, said Bradbury, adding that Portland General Electric is talking to his group about the program.

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Hydro's conservation plan could be too costly. (Ontario Hydro)

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Hydro's conservation plan could be too costly

THE much-vaunted but controversial conservation campaign at Ontario Hydro may prove ineffective in reducing energy use and could cost more than it saves, critics charge.

Hydro plans to spend \$6 billion in the next eight years to reduce demand by 5,200 megawatts. The utility argues this will curtail the need for new generating capacity and thus save billions in construction costs.

Hydro delivered energy-efficient light bulbs in November to 3.6 million Ontario households as part of the program.

The utility also plans to encourage the use of energy -efficient appliances through subsidies and will offer incentives to industry to lower power consumption.

But critics gripe about the cost of Hydro's plans. In its 1991 rate review report, the Ontario Energy Board says it is "very concerned with the cost effectiveness of Hydro's energy management expenditures. The board questions the usefulness of spending the money based on hopes of future saving."

While no one opposes the idea of conservation, critics question the accuracy of Hydro's assumptions and projected results. "Much of this is unproven," said Susan Hanna, a spokeswoman for the Municipal Electric Association. The MEA's fear is that Hydro's self-admittedly "ambitious" and interlinked targets won't be met, and Ontario will suddenly find itself with inadequate supply.

More strident in calling for new supply is the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario, which includes Dow Chemical of Canada Ltd. and Ford Motor Co. of Canada Ltd.

"If they fail to deliver, our concern is the cost of failure will be very high and will hurt industry," said AMPCO executive director Arthur Dickinson.

Some critics of Hydro's conservation programs focus on the light bulbs, which draw 52 watts rather than the usual 60. While Hydro argues using the program will save about \$4 million in electricity, the bulbs cost the utility about \$7 million.

And the so-called savings are based on the assumption they will be used to replace 60-watt bulbs, although they are just as likely to be used to replace 40-watt bulbs. Critics contend Hydro could likely save just as much money by compelling consumers to replace the bulbs in double 60-watt fixtures with a single 100-watt bulb, which would cast slightly more light.

Alison Knight, senior evaluation analyst for Hydro's residential programs, acknowledges these arguments, although she said it is unlikely the new bulbs will be used to replace 40-watt bulbs. She said a critical component of the giveaway is to raise the public's awareness.

"It's doing what it's supposed to do. It's causing a commotion, and making people think about energy conservation," she said.

What is more worrisome to some groups is that the concept of

subsidizing energy-saving devices could be extended to paying consumers and industry not to use power.

Changes being considered to the Ontario Energy Corporations Act under Bill 118 would allow Hydro to provide financial incentives to consumers to switch to other energy sources, such as natural gas. Some incentives, like those to install heat pumps, already exist.

"Hydro's marginal costs are less than rates and they're paying people to go away? This is insane," says Tom Adams, a utility analyst with Toronto-based Energy Probe Research Foundation.

While Hydro officials argue that conservation is aimed at reducing the need for new generating plants, there is evidence that implementation and advertising of conservation programs may form part of a hidden agenda to justify new generating capacity.

A 1989 Goldfarb Consultants report for Hydro said: "There is a two-fold impact in Hydro running an aggressive demand management program. It helps sell need -- it makes people more aware of the need to build a new electricity generating station. But it also appeals to the public's value of using resources wisely and efficiently."

Adams also notes that Hydro's two most expensive residential conservation programs, which subsidize heat pumps and electrically heated homes, are the same programs used a decade ago to promote energy consumption. "Conservation is far too important to be left in the hands of a utility with a vested interest in promoting power consumption," Adams notes.

Energy Probe believes that for a "going concern" such as Hydro to pay its customers to not purchase its product would be ludicrous.

PHOTO : Marc Eliesen, chairman of Ontario Hydro

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